

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-15

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-13 EB-11 FMC-04 COME-00 COA-02

CG-00 DRC-01 /142 W

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R 182158Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8574

INFO GOV PANCANAL

USCINCSO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PN, PQ

SUBJECT: LOPEZ GUEVARA ON CANAL NEGOTIATIONS

SUMMARY: IN AN ADDRESS AT PONONOME, PANAMANIAN TREATY NEGOTIATOR LOPEZ GUEVARA HAS AGAIN STATED THAT PANAMA'S BASIC TREATY OBJECTIVE IS JURISDICTION OVER THE CANAL ZONE AND HAS REPEATED THE GOP'S KNOWN OBJECTION TO THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE ZONE. END SUMMARY.

1. PANAMANIAN TREATY NEGOTIATOR CARLOS LOPEZ GUEVARA ADDRESSED THE QUESTION OF CANAL NEGOTIATIONS LAST WEEK AT THE POPULAR UNIVERSITY OF PONONOME, AN EXTENSION BRANCH OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PANAMA. IN REMARKS PUBLISHED IN THE SEPTEMBER 17 EDITION OF THE PANAMA AMERICA, LOPEZ GUEVARA REPORTEDLY REAFFIRMED THAT PANAMA'S PRINCIPAL TREATY OBJECTIVE IS THE RETURN OF THE CANAL ZONE TO PANAMANIAN JURISDICTION. AS HE PUT IT, "THIS BASIC OBJECTIVE IS THE COMPLETION OF PANAMA'S INDEPENDENCE BY THE RETURN OF THE CANAL ZONE TO THE POLITICAL, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE REST OF THE

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COUNTRY. IN PRACTICE THIS CAN ONLY BE ATTAINED WITH

THE FULL EXERCISE OF JURISDICTION BY PANAMA OVER ALL OF ITS TERRITORY, WHICH AS HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE UNITED STATES, INCLUDES THE CANAL ZONE."

2. LOPEZ GUEVARA FURTHER STATED THAT THE POWERS WHICH PANAMA IS PREPARED TO CEDE TO THE U.S. TO OPERATE AND PROTECT THE CANAL WOULD BE OF LIMITED DURATION (NO TIME LIMIT WAS APPARENTLY SPECIFIED) AND WOULD NOT IN ANY FASHION DILUTE PANAMA'S FULL SOVEREIGNTY OR JURISDICTION OVER THE AREA. ACCORDING TO LOPEZ GUEVARA, ONCE THIS IS CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD BY THE U.S., THERE CAN BE "ORDERLY AND EFFECTIVE NEGOTIATIONS."

3. TURNING TO THE QUESTION OF THE CANAL'S PROTECTION, LOPEZ GUEVARA ASSERTED THAT PANAMA MAINTAINS THAT EXISTING AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. "DO NOT AUTHORIZE THE MILITARY PRESNECE OF THAT COUNTRY IN OURS." CITING ARTICLE XXIII OF THE 1903 AGREEMENT, HE ASSERTS THAT WHILE THE U.S. MAY PPROTECT THE CANAL AND THE SHIPS THAT USE IT, IT IS AUTHORIZED TO DO SO "ONLY WHEN SUCH PROTECTION IS NECESSARY." THERE IS NO BASIS, HE GOES ON, FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF "A SOUTHERN COMMAND, THAT IS, NONE FOR THE ZONE TO FORM AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE DEFENSE PLANS OF THE UNITED STATES AND TO THUS TURN US INTO A MILITARY TARGET FOR THEIR POSSIBLE ENEMIES."

4. COMMENT: LOPEZ GUEVARA'S COMMENTS IN PENONOME ARE PART OF THE GOP'S ONGOING CAMPAIGN TO SENSITIZE THE PEOPLE OF THE INTERIOR TO THE CANAL ISSUE. THE DESIRABILITY OF DOING SO GREW OUT OF TORRIJOS' DIS- ENCHANTMENT WITH THE DEGREE OF AWARENESS OF THE CANAL ISSUE DEMONSTRATED IN THE HINTERLAND DURING HIS ROUND OF "CONSULTATIOUS" FOLLOWING THE MARCH SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 SEP 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973PANAMA05065
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: PANAMA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730927/aaaaatvc.tel
Line Count: 96
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <25-Jan-2002 by thigpegh>; APPROVED <13 FEB 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LOPEZ GUEVARA ON CANAL NEGOTIATIONS SUMMARY: IN AN ADDRESS AT PONONOME, PANAMANIAN TREATY
TAGS: PFOR, PN, PQ
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005